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# Raleigh Aquatics



## Intra-City Swim Team Parent's Handbook



## **Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department**

### **Mission Statement**

The purpose of Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department is to actively encourage, provide, promote, and protect quality leisure, recreation, and cultural opportunities, facilities, and environments that are essential for the enhancement of the lives of our citizens.

### **Purpose of the ICST Program**

The purpose of the Intra-City Swim Team (ICST) is to provide children with an opportunity to experience competitive swimming in a positive, encouraging, and rewarding atmosphere, while improving stroke technique and endurance, building team unity, forging new friendships, and developing good sportsmanship.

### **Program Overview**

An intra-squad program, each City of Raleigh pool's ICST competes against swim teams fielded by other City of Raleigh pools. During the summer season (June-August), the program is also offered at all eight City of Raleigh aquatic facilities. The ICST program is offered at Optimist Pool and Pullen Aquatic Center year-round, with seasons spanning the spring (February-April), summer (June-August), and fall (October-December) months. The cost for each season varies according to practice and season lengths.

The program is open to all children, ages 3-18, with an interest in competitive swimming and/or in developing their competitive strokes. In order to participate, children must be able to swim one length (25yds.) of the pool without assistance. Participants must be enrolled in the proper session (i.e., time and location) in order to participate in practices.

Practices are held at each facility at the times designated in the Leisure Ledger and Aquatics Brochure. Most sites offer practice series two to three times per week. During practices, coaches provide age- and ability-appropriate technique, strength, endurance, and cardiovascular training.

Each pool's team engages in competition with each other team in the league at least once per season. A championship competition is offered at the conclusion of each season, during which all teams in the league compete against one another in a finals-only format.

### **Registration Information**

The ICST Program is offered during three seasons: summer, fall, and spring. Due to varying season lengths, the price for enrolling in the league varies. The registration fee includes all practices and competitions. Participants can sign up through traditional methods of registration (walk-in or mail-in) or via the Internet at [reclink.raleighnc.gov](http://reclink.raleighnc.gov).

## **ICST Program Oversight**

### ***Head Coach***

Each ICST site will have a head coach who is chiefly responsible for ensuring that the goals and objectives of the program are being met. This person oversees and provides guidance to the other coaches over the course of the season. The head coach is responsible for ensuring that all practices and competitions are properly planned and staffed; as such, this person will guide the coaches in developing age- and ability-appropriate practices for all participants. The head coach will ensure that all coaches keep workout logs, attendance, and times on each participant in his/her group. This person serves as the main contact of the swim team and works to ensure that parents are kept informed about their swimmer's progress within the program. The head coach is responsible for delegating responsibilities appropriately to the coaching staff to ensure an effective use of resources.

### ***Assistant Coaches***

Assistant coaches are responsible for working with specific group(s) of children as assigned, and report to the head coach. In working with specific sets of swimmers, each assistant coach is charged with ensuring their participants' quality of experience on the team. Assistant coaches will teach and provide appropriate stroke and technique feedback to swimmers assigned to their group. The number of assistant coaches that a team has is dependent on the number of children at each practice time. Generally, for every 20 swimmers at each practice time, there will be one coach.

### ***Goals of all coaching staff***

- Increase your swimmers' endurance while swimming
- Emphasize safety in all exercises
- Introduce your swimmers to training equipment (e.g., pace clocks, kickboards, pull bouys, goggles)
- Present a common swimming vocabulary to be used by participants
- Help your swimmers develop appropriate, meaningful goals for their participation
- Perfect complimentary aspects of racing (e.g., starts, turns)
- Foster a competitive but fun environment

Integrate team-building components whenever possible

## **Aquatics Program Management**

The Raleigh Aquatics management staff oversees all facets of the ICST program. Please see the back cover of this booklet for contact information.

## Rules of Competition

As in any competitive sport, rules of competition exist. Swimmers not following the Rules of Competition may be disqualified by meet officials.

### *Individual Events*

- Swimmers may participate in individual events only for their own age group.
  - Each participant's age group is determined by his/her age on June 1 (summer season), November 1 (fall/winter season), or March 1 (spring season).
  - Swimmers do not change age groups during the swim season.
- Swimmers may swim up to 2 individual events and 1 relay per meet.
- Events shall be swum, alternating boys and girls and starting with the youngest age group swimming the event, in the following order:
  - medley relay
  - freestyle
  - butterfly
  - breaststroke
  - backstroke
  - individual medley
  - free relay
- During the summer season, 3-6 year olds swim 15 yard events. A rope will be used for a finish line. Catchers will be in the water to catch swimmers after they touch the rope.
- Heats or races may be combined to facilitate the meet timeline as determined by clerk of course officials.

### *Relays*

- There shall be a medley relay and a free relay for boys and girls in each age group. 8 and under swimmers will be classified as one age group for relays only.
- In addition to individual events, a swimmer may participate on only one relay team.
- A relay team will consist of 4 individual competitors, each to swim one leg of the prescribed relay distance. No individual may swim more than one leg in a relay.
- No individual may swim the same relay event in more than one age group.
  - Up to 3 swimmers may be moved up an age group to swim in a relay.
  - No swimmer in any age group may be “bumped” from the age-appropriate relay team to be replaced by a moved up younger swimmer.

## Basic Principles of the ICST Program

- Develop proper stroke technique for different age and ability levels
- Provide gradual increases in distance and intensity of swimming to ensure adaptation and success
- Foster motivational methods that will best achieve the endurance-swimming base necessary for competition
- Direct stretches and dryland training appropriate for each age/ability level

## Goals of the Program

Because each season of the ICST program is designed to be just three months in length, generally speaking the goals that coaches establish for the season will be short-term by nature. Below identifies some common goals that the coaching staff will have for their swimmers:

### **Early Season Goals**

- Teaching proper stroke techniques
- Improving strength, endurance, and flexibility
- Introducing swimmers to training equipment (including kickboards, pull buoys, and pace clocks)
- Presenting a swimming vocabulary
- Helping swimmers set appropriate, meaningful goals for both themselves and the team

**Midseason/Late Season Goals** – Once swimmers have been acclimated to the team and to proper stroke techniques, the following components may be added to their training:

- Increasing swimmers' endurance
- Perfecting turning techniques
- Improving racing techniques
- Developing team spirit

Other competitive swimming goals which may be introduced to older, more advanced swimmers include:

- Helping swimmers gain a sense of pace while swimming
- Encouraging swimmers to handle stress



## Practices

### ***Attendance***

Although attending a certain number of practices is not mandatory for swimmers participating in the ICST program, swimmers should attend as many practices as possible. A swimmer's performance is more likely to improve if he/she has attended practices on a regular basis.

### ***Teaching Proper Stroke Technique and Increasing Endurance***

A majority of practice time will be spent on teaching proper stroke technique and increasing swimmer's endurance. According to swimmer's age and ability level, the following elements of competitive swimming may be emphasized:

- **Strokes:** freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, individual medley
- **Starts:** forward start, backstroke start, relay start
- **Turns:** freestyle flip turn, backstroke turn, breaststroke turn, butterfly turn

### ***Dryland Training***

Dryland training compliments in-water training. Coaches may use dryland training techniques such as pre-practice group stretching sessions to meet with the team, develop team spirit, and/or disseminate information.

### ***Developing Team Spirit***

Development of team spirit is an important part of the program. Swimmers learn to care not only about their own improvement and performance, but they also learn the value of teamwork and good sportsmanship through the integration of activities focused on team spirit. Coaches may lead swimmers in team cheers or promote other team building activities such as poster painting or ribbon ceremonies.

### ***Swimming Before or After Practice***

We encourage swimmers to visit our facilities to practice skills learned while in the program. However, *participants and their family members must pay gate admission to use the pool before or after practice.*

## Rules of Participation

1. Swimmers may only be affiliated with and compete for one pool's ICST per season.
2. All participants in the league are between the ages of 3 and 18 years old. All participants must be able to swim 25 yards non-stop without assistance in order to participate.
3. Each swim team will hold no more than 3 formal practices per week.
  - a. For additional instruction, swimmers are encouraged to participate in the pools' American Red Cross Learn-to-Swim classes or stroke clinics.
  - b. While practice attendance is not mandatory, swimmers are highly encouraged all practices.
  - c. In order to compete in meets, a swimmer must participate in at least one practice per week (unless waived by his/her coach).
4. A swimmer may not change teams in the middle of the season unless a valid change of address can be presented to Terri Stroupe, Aquatics Director.
5. Participants must wear appropriate swimwear, in accordance with City of Raleigh policy. Swim trunks with frayed or unhemmed ends cannot be worn. Raleigh Aquatics discourages team apparel unless a sponsor can supply the same for all eight pools. Any use or encouragement of team apparel must be approved by Terri Stroupe, Aquatics Director, in advance.
6. Colored swim caps and wristbands are provided for each team, and swimmers should be encouraged to use them so that meet personnel know which team each swimmer is on.
7. Swimmers are expected to abide by all pool rules posted at the facility. Any suspension over one day from any City Pool for misconduct will mean an automatic dismissal from the offender's swim team.

## Swimmers' and Parents' Code of Conduct

As a competitor or parent of a swimmer on the ICST, I agree to:

- **Focus on team efforts, as well as individual efforts**
- **Act, think, look, and talk positively**
- **Take responsibility** for your belongings, words, actions, and swimming
- **Attend practice regularly**
- **Be on time and remember all equipment** (cap, goggles, suit, towel, etc.)
- **Demonstrate good sportsmanship**
- **Be honest** and give an honest effort toward achieving your goals
- **Communicate with coaches** regarding anything that might affect a swimmer's performance, or the team as a whole
- **Be supportive** of coaching staff and teammates



## Overview of Competitive Strokes

**Freestyle (Front Crawl)**: This is the fastest stroke in competitive swimming. The arms move in an alternating motion through the water. The head turns for inhalation in time with the backward thrust of the breathing arm. The flutter kick is used and is also a constant alternating motion of the feet.

**Backstroke (Back Crawl)**: This stroke is performed on the back. The arms alternately enter the water behind the shoulder; elbow straight, little finger first. The flutter kick is used.

**Breaststroke**: This is a prone stroke using symmetrical motions of the arms and legs. This kick, called the whip kick, resembles the kick of a frog, and the arms move simultaneously to create an inverted heart-shaped pattern.

**Butterfly**: This is a very difficult stroke done with the body in the prone position using symmetrical motions of the arms and legs. The arms are brought out of the water behind the body, enter the water out front, and pull back together. The kick, called a dolphin kick, is an up-and-down wave-like movement of the hips, legs, and feet.

**IM (Individual Medley)**: Swimmers swim equal lengths of each stroke in the following order: Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Freestyle.

**Medley Relay**: Four swimmers per team, each swimmer swimming an equal length of a different stroke in the following order: Backstroke, Breaststroke, Butterfly, and Freestyle.

**Freestyle Relay**: Four swimmers per team, each swimmer swimming an equal length of freestyle.



## Competitions

Competitions are scheduled throughout the season and may take a traditional form (i.e., individual events and relays) or a non-traditional form (e.g., holiday relay meet). The Head Coach of each pool's ICST coordinates registration for competitions and secures parent volunteers to help with the swim meets. Competition schedules are noted in the Aquatics Brochure and on registration receipt confirmation.

### *Entering Swimmers in Competitions*

We encourage all participants in the league to compete in swim meets. With the help of their parents, swimmers choose the events in which they will compete through completing meet entry sheets. Meet entry sheets will be distributed to program participants at least four practices prior to a scheduled meet, and should be returned to the coaches at least a week before the meet. Swimmers may enter only two individual events and one relay, or three individual events, per meet.

Event cards will be prepared by the coaching staff based upon the meet entry sheets. On meet day, event cards are distributed to the swimmers prior to each event at the clerk of course.

### *Meet Check-in and Warm-ups*

Coaches will advise participants of the desired time to arrive at each meet. Generally speaking, it is advisable to arrive at the host pool at least 20 minutes prior to the warm-up time so that swimmers can check-in with their team and get acclimated to the facility. At meet check-in, swimmers check in with their coaches and their event choices (including relay assignments) are finalized. Special instructions related to the meet may be given. During the warm-up period coaches work with swimmers on race day tune-up skills.

### *Team Area*

After warm-ups, swimmers sit with their teammates in a designated team area. Because the location of this area will vary from facility to facility, coaches will inform the swimmers of where to sit during the meet. Keeping each team together during the meet facilitates a faster meet, and fosters team spirit.

## General Meet Guidelines for Swimmers and Parents

### *What to Bring*

- Plenty of towels - 2 to 4 depending on number of events
- Warm clothing – morning meets can be cool
- Chairs or blankets to sit on
- Shade/tarp if you have one (during summer meets)
- Cooler for fruit, juices, water, snacks etc.
- Snacks
- Team cap, wristband, and goggles
- Visors and sunscreen (during summer meets)
- EXCITEMENT!

### *When to Arrive*

- Arrive early - at least 15 minutes prior to warm-up time – so that swimmers can check in with their coaches prior to warm-ups.
- Warm-up times will be announced by coaching staff at practices preceding each meet.

### *At the Meet*

- Swimmers should stay in or close to team area. Listen for your event and be ready to go to the clerk of course with your goggles and swim cap in hand.
- Parents - please know where your swimmer is at all times. If you are working the meet please assign another parent who is willing to watch out for your child.
- It is ultimately the swimmer's responsibility to get to the clerk of course and the blocks on time.
- Check with the coach before you leave the meet. You may be on a relay at the end of the meet!

**Have FUN!**



## The Role of Parent Volunteers

Parent volunteers are a vital part of the ICST program, as they are needed to staff each meet. Generally, parent volunteers will be utilized at meets as timers, ribbon writers, or score keepers, jobs which do not require a high level of swimming knowledge or training. If your coach or meet organizers ask for your help, please be prepared to assist!

## Competition Personnel

Below is a list of typical duties performed by Raleigh Aquatics staff and/or parent volunteers in running ICST meets:

### **Timers**

Need one (1) timer per lane at each meet. Timers clock each swimmer in their lane and record the time on the swimmer's entry card. To do so, the timer starts the watch when a whistle or horn is sounded. The timer stops the watch when the swimmer touches the wall on the last lap of the race. The head timer is not assigned to an individual lane but carries back-up watches in the event a timer misses the start of a race.

### **Clerk of course**

When swimmers are called to the clerk of course area, clerk of course officials organize the heats (races) by swimmer's entry cards. It is at the clerk of course where swimmers are assigned lanes and escorted to the appropriate lane.

### **Starter**

The starter announces the event, stroke, length of race, and race number before each race. This individual starts the race by use of a whistle or horn.

### **Runners**

Runners collect the finished entry cards from all the timers and carry them to the scorer's table. In the 15 and 25 yard events, they also must take the entry cards from the swimmers and take them to timers before each race.

### **Scorers**

Scorers sort event cards after each race by event number, organize them by time, and assign scores to relevant races.

### **Ribbon Writers**

Ribbon writers fill out the ribbons for each race from the entry cards given to them by the scorers. They fill out back of the ribbons with name, date, time in race, event and team.

### **The Clerk of Course**

The clerk of course assigns swimmers to their individual heat (race) and lane. Swimmers enter the clerk of course area and are grouped with those swimming the same event. Lane numbers are assigned and swimmers are escorted to their lanes by meet officials. *We ask that parents stay clear of the clerk of course area so that clerk officials can assign lanes.*

### **Recording Times**

Swimmers' times will be recorded on their event cards at the conclusion of each race. Based on the times, each event will be scored and times recorded for the meet records. Completed event cards will be returned to coaches at the end of the meet; coaches typically return the completed cards to the swimmers with the ribbons.

### **Ribbons**

Participants who finish 1<sup>st</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> in each event will receive ribbons corresponding to their finish in the event. Those not finishing in the top eight will receive participant ribbons. All ribbons will have swimmers' times recorded on them by meet table workers. Coaches will distribute ribbons at a practice following the meet. At some competitions, heat winner prizes will be awarded in lieu of ribbons.

### **Team Scoring**

Because the ICST program emphasizes team work and sportsmanship, in addition to individual scoring, team performance is scored at each meet. Teams whose members finish in the top eight for each event will be awarded team points in the following method: 1<sup>st</sup>=9 pts., 2<sup>nd</sup>=7 pts., 3<sup>rd</sup>=6 pts., 4<sup>th</sup>=5 pts., 5<sup>th</sup>=4 pts., 6<sup>th</sup>=3 pts., 7<sup>th</sup>=2 pts., 8<sup>th</sup>=1 pt. Relay events will earn double points for each scored finish. Team scores will be announced for boys and girls following the meet.

